

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 03617 221505Z

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9725

S E C R E T BEIRUT 3617

NODIS

FOR ATHERTON FROM BROWN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, PINT, LE, US, SY

SUBJECT: SYRIAN SUSPICIONS OF U.S. IN LEBANON

1. I NOTE FROM REPORTING OF DAMASCUS AND OTHER POSTS, PARTICULARLY AMMAN'S 2129 ON CODEL MATHIAS' CONVERSATIONS, THAT PRESIDENT ASSAD HARBORS INCREASING SUSPICIONS OF U.S. ROLE IN LEBANON. IN PARTICULAR, HE IS "AMAZED" AT OUR CONTACTS WITH JUMBLATT. I LIKE SENATOR MATHIAS' OBSERVATION THAT, WHILE ASSAD SEES U.S.-ISRAELI PLOT TO KEEP SYRIA FROM SUCCEEDING IN LEBANON, ARAFAT SEES U.S.- SYRIAN PLOT TO ENSURE SYRIA'S SUCCESS IN CONTROLLING PALESTINIANS. AS MATHIAS NOTED, NEITHER "CONSPIRACY" HAS ANY KERNEL OF TRUTH.

2. OUR CONTACTS WITH JUMBLATT GO BACK MANY MONTHS AND UNTIL RECENTLY HAVE BEEN MAINLY INDIRECT THROUGH MEMBERS OF JUMBLATT'S ENTOURAGE WHO HAD RELATIONS WITH EMBASSY AS BUSINESSMEN DEALING WITH U.S. THESE CONTACTS LATER MATURED INTO DIRECT POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS WITH JUMBLATT, PARTICULARLY AFTER MY ARRIVAL. AS I AM CONFIDENT ASSAD WOULD UNDERSTAND, JUMBLATT IS IMPORTANT ACTOR ON LEBANESE SCENE, AND THEREFORE I HAD TO TOUCH BASES WITH HIM IN MY MISSION. MY AIM WAS, FIRST, TO REASSURE HIM OF U.S. GOALS IN LEBANON AND, SECONDLY, TO URGE CONTINUING MODERATION ON HIS PART. THE DISPARATE PARTIES HE HEADS HAVE BEEN FREQUENT SOURCE OF MISUNDERSTANDINGS--INDEED, SOMETIMES DOWNRIGHT LIES-- ABOUT U.S. POLICY IN LEBANON; SAS

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LEADER OF THESE PARTIES AND MAN OF LONG EXPERIENCE IN LEBANESE

POLITICS, JUMBLATT SEEMED BEST AND ONLY CONTACT TO DAMPEN THESE DISTORTED OPINIONS. IN URGING MODERATION, I WAS SEEKING TO ENCOURAGE THE REASONABLE SIDE AND DETER THE RADICAL SIDE OF THIS MAN'S COMPLEX POLITICAL CHARACTER.

3. IN ALL OF THESE CONTACTS WITH JUMBLATT, OUR AIM PARALLELS THAT OF SYRIA RATHER THAN THE REVERSE. JUST AS ASSAD WANTS PEACE TO COME TO LEBANON THROUGH SYRIAN MEDIATION, SO DO WE. ROLE OF JUMBLATT IN THIS IS IMPORTANT, AND WE ARE TRYING TO KEEP HIM ON BOARD THE SETTLEMENT PROCESS. WE THINK WE HAVE BEEN PARTLY SUCCESSFUL, THOUGH AS ASSAD KNOWS AS WELL AS ANYONE, JUMBLATT IS OFTEN HARD TO FATHOM. IN ANY EVENT ASSAD WOULD BE APPARENTLY SURPRISED TO LEARN TO WHAT EXTENT WE HAVE BEEN SUPPORTING SYRIAN POLITICAL MEDIATIONS VIS-A-VIS JUMBLATT, DESPITE LATTER'S GROWING SUSPICIONS ABOUT THIS EXCERCISE.

4. SUGGEST THIS MESSAGE BE REPEATED TO DAMASCUS. PERHAPS AN OCCASION WOULD ARISE WHEN DICK MURPHY WOULD FIND IT USEFUL TO PASS ON ITS CONTENTS.
BROWN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, FOREIGN RELATIONS, ALLEGATIONS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, POLITICAL SITUATION, CAT-B
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 APR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GarlanWA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BEIRUT03617
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: OA
Errors: N/A
Film Number: P850108-2354
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760436/aaaabdrp.tel
Line Count: 81
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GarlanWA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 NOV 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <03 NOV 2003 by GarlanWA>; APPROVED <04 NOV 2003 by GarlanWA>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SYRIAN SUSPICIONS OF US IN LEBANON
TAGS: PFOR, PREL, PINT, PINS, MPOL, LE, SY, US, PLO, (ASAD, HAFIZ), (JUMBLATT, KAMAL)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006